

AGENCY FOR TOXIC SUBSTANCES AND DISEASE REGISTRY  
OFFICE OF HEALTH ASSESSMENT  
SITE VISIT REPORT  
AMERICAN CROSSARM AND CONDUIT COMPANY  
CHEHALIS, WASHINGTON

July 18, 1989

Introduction

While conducting a Preliminary Health Assessment on the American Crossarm and Conduit Company Site (ACC), the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) determined that physical conditions present at ACC pose a significant hazard to human health.

This document is issued to alert the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the State of Washington, and the public of the serious threat to human health from the numerous physical hazards present at ACC.

For additional information please contact:

Mark M. Bashor, Ph.D.  
Director, Office of Health Assessment  
Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry  
1600 Clifton Road, NE, MS F38  
Atlanta, Georgia 30333  
404/488-4810

Background

The ACC is located on 16 acres of land in Chehalis, Lewis County, Washington. Historically, the facility operated as a wood treatment operation; currently it is being operated under the name Freeway Parts, as a salvage operation. During a site visit conducted by ATSDR on March 16, 1989, numerous physical hazards were noted on-site.

The site is not adequately secured or restricted from trespassers. A 3-acre section of the site is surrounded by a 7-foot, chain-link fence topped with 3-strand barbed wire. This small section of the site, fenced by EPA during emergency response activities in 1986, is the former wood treatment area. The remainder of the site is semi-restricted by a wetland south of the site and by a large drainage ditch which parallels the railroad tracks that are immediately adjacent to the western boundary of the site. There is no fence along the central portion of the eastern boundary to prevent access to the wood drying kilns or the factory; however, there is a fence along the southern portion of the eastern boundary where the cars and machinery from the salvage operation are stored (see Appendix). Areas of the site, outside of the EPA fence, have not been comprehensively characterized for chemical contamination. Access to these areas should be restricted for this reason as well.

During the site visit, a breach in the EPA fence was noted by the ATSDR staff. A scaffold had been pulled up against the fence, with the ladder to the fence. The barbed wire above the scaffold ladder had been mashed down, indicating someone may have trespassed and entered the hazardous area. Also, while touring the wood treatment area, spray-painted graffiti was noted in the shed, indicating possible access to the site.

Within the fenced area there are a number of physical hazards. EPA excavated an old surface impoundment to incinerate the soil leaving an open, lined excavation, approximately 2 feet deep, which has filled with water, along the western boundary of the wood treatment area. The resulting pond could cause an injury as a result of a fall or could lead to a drowning. Debris, consisting of broken pallets, barrels, tires, pvc pipe, and what appeared to be old iron frames for railroad carts, was piled between the retorts and the chemical storage tanks, as well as in the shed beside the tanks (see Appendix). The debris could cause puncture wounds, broken limbs, or worse by either falling on a child or by a child falling on the debris. Standing liquids had collected in the bermed area by the retorts, tanks, and debris. Although the liquids may not be deep, they are opaque and cannot be seen through; therefore, there is a potential for injury from an unseen object in the liquid.

In the section of the site that is not well restricted, there are also a number of physical hazards. The wood drying kilns, located just south of the EPA fence, in the central portion of the site, are constructed on pilings above a part of the wetland located south of the site. They stand approximately 15 feet high and are approximately 50 feet long (north to south). A fire, which occurred in 1987, destroyed portions of the cooling shed, the first few kilns, and the platform on which they were built. The cooling shed and kilns remain as holes which may be as much as 10 feet deep. The debris from the burnt kilns still remains haphazardly piled in the general area of the kilns. The portion of the platform still intact extends from the kilns west to the old railroad tracks. The platform is very slippery when wet as a result of the creosote coating on the planks. The platform is also missing planks and sections. A child playing in this area could easily get injured while climbing around in the burned-out areas and the debris piles, or by slipping and falling on the platform.

The old railroad tracks were built on a trestle. The trestle has deteriorated beyond repair over the years. In some areas there are no ties remaining and where ties do remain, they are splintered and broken. The area surrounding the trestle is covered with debris consisting of splintered and broken pieces of wood, barrels, and old machinery. The debris could cause puncture wounds, broken limbs, or worse by a child falling on the debris.

The factory, also on pilings, is south of the kilns. The building itself is very dilapidated. Portions of the roof and walls have rotted and have caved in. Machines and automobiles from the Freeway Parts salvage

operation are stored within the factory building and in the area east of the factory. The salvage operation is ongoing. Some of the cars have been placed south of the factory near the ACC landfill.

The landfill itself is partially covered with soil, but there is also much debris in the area. This entire area would appear very attractive to children as a place to play. The children could be injured while playing around the old automobiles as well as playing in the debris in the landfill.

#### Basis for ATSDR's Concern

As a result of the site visit, ATSDR has determined that the physical conditions at this site are a hazard to human health. The primary concern regarding the physical hazards is for local children and teenagers accessing the site. There is a housing complex located across the street due east of the factory, 2 elementary schools located approximately 1,500 feet northeast of the site (2 blocks); another school is located approximately 2,000 feet due east of the site (5 blocks), and a reform school located approximately 1 mile southeast of the site. A softball field is adjacent to the east boundary of the site. Since access to much of the site is not restricted, there is a likelihood that children use the site to play on.

#### Conclusions and Recommendations

As a result of the lack of adequate site restriction and the proximity of a large number of children present near the site, ATSDR has determined that the public health threat associated with the physical hazards at this site is unacceptable.

ATSDR recommends site access be restricted as soon as possible. Access to areas of this site which contain physical hazards should be restricted to protect local children and others from probable injury as a result of contact with these physical hazards. The Preliminary Health Assessment, which is currently being prepared, addresses additional public health concerns.